



From the Editor

“The Final Cut”

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“Sun is the same in a relative way and then one day you find six years have got behind you”. So, I have been the Editor-in-Chief of *Silva Fennica* since the beginning of 2019 and my period as the EiC is coming to an end. It has been a whirlwind, with all sorts of things, some of them unforeseen. When I started, we were still living the time when the impact of the article processing charges (APC) on manuscript submissions was unclear. At the same time as I took over as the Editor-in-Chief, we moved to using Subject Editors to take care of the manuscript review process. The change was successful and in line with current editorial practices. In my second year as the Editor-in-Chief, the COVID-19 pandemic took the world by surprise. In publishing, this was reflected in a delayed reduction in the manuscript supply because of missed research analyses in 2020–2021. Subsequently, numerous geopolitical conflicts contributed also to scientific publishing during my period at least by freezing scientific co-operation.

Finnish science policy has not favored recently small publishers over large publishers in paying the open access APCs. Our move towards greater openness of data and codes also had a significant impact on the journal, perhaps even slightly negative in the short term, but *Silva Fennica* has always been a pioneer in open publishing in forest sciences. Thus, our aim is also to be among the first forestry journals to open research data, while promoting transparent writing to improve the quality and reproducibility of articles. This is our specialty as a small non-profit publisher. Finally, I could mention as one of our achievements the promotion of *Silva Fennica* to level 2 by the national Publication Forum. This is of considerable importance for the researchers working in Finnish universities.

The theme of my last Editorial as EiC of *Silva Fennica* is time. Six years is a relatively short time in the dynamics of the boreal forest, but a career for an Editor-in-chief. In Finland, there has recently been a debate on the definition of old-growth forests based on the age of the stand and the amount of decaying wood. The views of the parties have been quite far apart and the official government’s proposal of 140 years of age and more than 40 cubic meters of deadwood in southern Finland have been considered unreasonable. On the other hand, a limit as low as 80 years has been suggested. Without taking any position on what the criteria should be, I could say that age is a funny indicator, which increases by one year in one year for a stand that is not cut during the year, and this applies to every single stand and every year.

A familiar phrase is that the last old-growth forests in southern Finland are being cut down and should be protected immediately. I remember the 1970s, when I was a schoolboy in Central Finland and involved in forestry through my father’s profession. Even then, the last old-growth

forests were being cut and the debate on nature conservation was lively. However, back then, the last old-growth forests were probably not the same as they are now, but the unprotected old-growth forests that exist today were middle-aged forests still modified earlier by selective logging, maybe later also by low thinning but probably not intensively managed in most cases. But everything changes, thanks to the age dynamics.

In September, I was visiting in the Natural Resources Institute of Finland’s Punkaharju Research Forest. There is a stand of spruce and pine trees established by seeding in 1900. Nothing has been done to the stand since then – apart from possible collection of firewood during the Second World War – as the site is a thinning trial’s untreated control and the only one of its kind. However, the development of the stand is known. The current volume of living trees on the site is over 900 cubic meters and the volume of deadwood is over 50 cubic meters. The site is still a carbon sink but is becoming a carbon source. In terms of age, the stand still did not meet the government’s official old-growth criteria, but it did in terms of dead wood. The best thing about the site was seeing what nature has done for 125 years without human influence at the stand level.

Scientific publishing has also changed over time. When I started my scientific career in the early 1990s, manuscripts were sent as hard copies in an envelope to a journal, and the revised version at the last minute by courier mail. A lot of good things have happened since then, online access, text similarity check systems and open access to name just a few. The review process has always been a bottleneck in scientific publishing. It is notoriously difficult to find peer reviewers that would accept the invitation. Although fast fashion is a thing, hopefully fast science, where seemingly peer-reviewed manuscripts are accepted before the sun rises from the east, is not the only way to the future. This is the most devastating publication invention. “I gotta admit I’m a little bit confused”.

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